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THE ROUND TABLE

A BOTTOMLESS POND

Once upon a time there was a dreadful little pond which was called bottomless until an armless man waded across it. In English orthography there is such a pool, called plurals in *-oes*. The *International* and the *Standard* contradict each other; the usual assumption, from Mätzner to Kittredge, has been that *-os* is an irregular form. The present writer has no arms of scholarship, but he has walked through the shallow water and begs to report that there are only eight nouns that must have plurals in *-oes*: *echo*, *hero*, *negro*, *no*, *potato*, *tomato*, *tornado*, *torpedo*. Timorous writers may add *jingo*, the game of *dominoes*, and the Scotch *joes*.

His first step was to go through an abridged dictionary, collecting 240 nouns of this type; his second was to add 60 from another dictionary; his third was to learn from the publishers of the *Century*, *International*, and *Standard* that each group of editors aimed to give all plurals in *-oes*, and that *-os* was understood in each dictionary if no plural was indicated; his fourth step was to infer that *-os* is regular; his fifth was to find out how many of the 300 nouns had no warranted plural in *-os* in any dictionary. There were only eight. The armless man stood on the opposite shore.

Then, for fear that the abysm lay to one side of this diameter, he crossed again by going through the *b*'s in the *Century*—old part and Supplement. He added 98, to not one of which would the *Century* concede *-oes*. A third traverse was made through the *m*'s; 96 were added; only the Scotch *merligoes* lay deeper than the placid muck of *-os*.

It is a marvelous myth. Think of a textbook rule which requires us to write *autoes*, *lean-toes*, *magnetoes*, *nulloes*, *tobaccoes*, *tuxedoes*, *twoes*. Yet when Mätzner originated it in 1873 he reported real observation: of the twenty examples I can come upon in Johnson's quotations only three are printed *-os*. Notice, however, that Mätzner qualified his rule by a far-reaching negative: "The *-oes* form is fixed only in the more familiar nouns." In the half-century since he wrote, *-os* has been steadily prevailing. Why shouldn't simplified spelling make its victory complete?

The deity who presides over this Bottomless Pond decrees that *torpedos* is impious and *teredos* sanctified; that *tornados* is profane and *trovados* holy; that *mangos* is blasphemous and *gringos* consecrated. Must we worship him? Even the Simplified Spelling Board does him reverence, "informing you that in practis we follow the prevailing analogy of inserting an *e* before the *s*." They bow to a Philistine god, as Ahaz did, while warring against Philistia.

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A PLAN FOR A SHAKSPEARE EXHIBIT

As a celebration of the Shakspeare tercentenary in our high school, the annual Senior-class play is to be *The Taming of the Shrew*. The conditions not being favorable for a festival, enthusiasm for Shakspeare is to be fostered by an exhibit prepared by the fourth-year English classes, under a general chairman, working under the guidance of the faculty representative. Co-operation on the part of other departments will take the form of illustrative drawings made in the mechanical-drawing department and refreshments prepared by the department of household arts, while Latin, German, and French classes will report on the exhibit in the languages of their respective departments. English students will draw up advertisements, advance articles, and reports on actual results, to be used in the school and local papers. The lower English classes will report to their teachers what the exhibit meant to them.

The room in which the exhibit is to be held has two doors. One of these is to be closed by two booths; in one of these seventeenth-century maidens will dispense "cakes and ale," and in the other Shakspeare book plates, secured from the Associated Shakspeare Clubs of Toledo, Ohio, are to be sold.

The walls are to be covered with hangings, for convenience in arranging the posters and other contributions of the students. These will be in six sections, as follows:

1. *Posters*.—(a) Made by pasting clippings and pictures from newspapers and magazines; (b) original sketches of scenes from plays, and of characters, made by class artists (prize to be offered for the best).
2. *Cartoons*.—(a) Gleaned from publications; (b) original (prize).
3. *Literary samples*.—(a) Essays: *Macbeth* as a play, character sketches, etc.; (b) poems: poems to Shakspeare. Blank-verse scene